

**Opening Statement
Chairman Tom Davis
Committee on Government Reform
“OUT OF MANY, ONE: ASSESSING BARRIERS TO INFORMATION
SHARING IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY”**

May 8, 2003

Good morning. A quorum being present, the Committee on Government Reform will come to order. I would like to welcome everyone to today's hearing on the Department of Homeland Security's efforts to integrate information systems to enhance information sharing.

Earlier this year, with the establishment of DHS, 22 agencies and more than 170,000 employees were consolidated under one new department. It would be a monumental challenge under any circumstance to integrate the disparate information infrastructures of that many government agencies manned by that many employees. But, given the critical mission of this new Department to protect the nation against terrorism, this task takes on an unparalleled urgency.

DHS needs to develop and implement a strategic plan to carry out this vital mission, including the ability of the new Department to obtain, analyze, and timely distribute essential and actionable information for federal, state, and local government and private sector use. DHS must also develop and implement security and privacy safeguards, a capital planning and investment control process, program and performance management, and risk management.

If a strategic plan to integrate information systems is effectively and efficiently implemented, we not only will achieve economies of scale, but will also be better prepared to protect the nation's physical and cyber infrastructure, secure our borders, counteract chemical and biological attacks, and respond to terrorist and natural disaster incidents.

But that's a considerable "if" we're talking about. The obstacles facing DHS in effectively integrating information functions are formidable. As with the merger of any corporate or government entities, there are obvious challenges in integrating business functions such as payroll, human resources, and communications. But similar to the consolidation of the military service branches within the Department of Defense in 1947, DHS is faced with the need to integrate multiple agencies that have a common security mission, in addition to its many non-security functions.

DHS is further confronted with the task of communicating effectively with other federal, state, and local entities, as well as the public. It is particularly critical that information be relayed to our first responders at the state and local level. They are on the front lines of our war against terrorism, and they need to be adequately informed to protect the public.

These challenges are not solely a factor of the new department's size or the magnitude of its mission. The fact is, DHS inherited information sharing problems that already existed within many of the agencies that now make up the new Department. For example, the General Accounting Office identified problems pertaining to terrorist watch lists, which are an integral part of our nation's ability to secure its borders. The GAO found that the current approach to developing and using watch lists is diffuse and nonstandard, and has resulted in nine agencies creating twelve different lists, largely because the lists were developed and have evolved in response to individual agencies' unique mission needs and cultural development. The extent to which this information can be shared among federal agencies and between the federal government and state and local entities is severely constrained by fundamental differences in the watch list systems. These are by no means the only examples of opportunities to improve information sharing, but they illustrate one of the primary reasons for integrating agencies that are vital to homeland protection under one department.

The Chief Information Officer in DHS is responsible for coordinating information sharing nationwide, and is doing so by creating a national enterprise architecture. This common element in improving information system integration, according to both GAO and the Office of Management and Budget, seeks to ensure that, as the agencies within DHS invest in information technology and new management strategies, those strategies and technologies serve the overall plan and mission of the Department as well as the federal government. With a coordinated strategy for efficient information technology acquisition and implementation, mission-essential decisions can be based on more accurate information while requiring less time. Wise investment in interoperable information technology reduces unnecessary spending in redundant or stovepipe systems.

It took almost forty years for the military service branches to be integrated effectively under the Department of Defense. With DHS, we simply do not have that kind of time: we're talking about protecting our nation against very real terrorist threats. Congress must be assured that information integration standards and goals are defined, timely implementation of these benchmarks is achieved, and accountability is maintained.

Last week marked one hundred days since the creation of the Department. Now is the time for this Committee to review the status of the Department's efforts to integrate its information sharing functions; what obstacles the Department and other participants have identified and how those obstacles are being addressed; and when we can expect to see measurable progress in integration of information sharing. The need is urgent, the challenge monumental – and it may be later than we think.

We have assembled an impressive group of witnesses to help us understand the current status of information sharing at DHS and its plans for the future. On the first panel, we will hear from Steve Cooper, the Chief Information Officer of the Department of Homeland Security, and Mark Forman, Associate Director for Information Technology and E-Government at the Office of Management and Budget. They will focus on the Department's efforts to integrate

information systems at DHS and the coordination of those efforts with OMB's government-wide enterprise architecture.

The second panel will include Robert Dacey and Randolph Hite from the General Accounting Office, who will discuss GAO's analysis of the Department's information sharing integration. Also on that panel is The Honorable Charles Rossotti, former Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service, who will discuss his efforts to consolidate that agency's information technology functions.

On the third panel, we will hear from the private sector, which is directly involved in the Department's development of information system integration. We will hear from Steven Perkins, Senior Vice President for Public Sector & Homeland Security for Oracle Corporation, Greg Baroni, President of the Global Public Sector for Unisys Corporation, and Mark Bisnow, Senior Vice President of webMethods, Inc.

I would like to thank all of our witnesses for appearing before the Committee, and I look forward to their testimony.